

AFRL commander commends Eglin AFB, Munitions laboratory for role in Kosovo

by Rex Swenson, Munitions Directorate

EGLIN AFB, FLA. — “It was a great exhibition of Team Eglin at Kosovo” said Brig. Gen. Paul D. Nielsen, Commander of the Air Force Research Laboratory, during a visit here July 6. AFRL’s Munitions Directorate is located at Eglin and develops the technologies that make the Air Force’s weaponry ‘smart’.

The general was complimentary of Eglin’s reputation for arming the Air Force. “It is really a unique opportunity here at Eglin where you have operational, acquisition, test, and research people all at the same site. I think we are seeing this as a model for much of Air Force Materiel Command in the future – to have the technologist coupled with the users and acquirers, all at one place at one time, working on one project so we can transfer technology quicker,” he said.

The AFRL Commander predicts future air armaments will be smaller and more accurate. “We have seen from recent skirmishes that we want to have less collateral damage,” he said, “and that kind of stresses us, because it means we have to be very precise and have just the right amount of explosion so as not to damage other structures. That really stresses the technologies used in guidance systems and explosive charges carried in our munitions.”

Nielsen has a special interest and appreciation of air armament. Prior to taking command of AFRL on April 14, he was vice commander of Aeronautical Systems Center at Wright-Patterson. ASC is AFMC’s largest product center and is responsible for developing and acquiring almost all the Air Force’s aircraft. “Miniaturization,” Nielsen added, “seems to be the wave of the future. When we make our bombs smaller it also means vehicles such as the B-1 and B-2 can carry more munitions and on the same mission attack many more targets in a much more efficient manner,” he said.

Eglin’s annual Air Armament Summit drew special praise from the AFRL commander. The summit, conceived and established by Maj. Gen. Michael Kostelnik, commander of Eglin’s Air Armament Center, is attended by leading air armament experts from throughout the DoD, aerospace industry, and academia. During its sessions, the direction the Air Force will take in armament is mapped. The blueprint can be altered as new technologies unfold.

“It is a wonderful forum and a tremendous innovation. Other centers are looking at it and incorporating some of its features in their annual events because it is one of the most productive events we know of in AFMC,” Nielsen said.

Nielsen also looks to the future and is especially concerned with the type of leadership that will determine the fate of the Air Force. “As we look over the next 20 or 30 years, we need our leadership to be extremely well rounded – broad as well as deep. One of the things that is going to challenge us as we go into the 21st Century is the Air Force is going to be more technically complex than in the past. So we will not only need leaders who are skilled in operations, but who also have insight into technical solutions that might be there. We will need leaders who have moved in and out of both these worlds – people who are operators that understand what goes on in acquisition and the lab business. And in the labs and acquisition we will need people who have served some tours in the operations world so they can support it well,” he said.

The AFRL commander said he was pleased with what he saw during his tour of the Munitions Directorate and doesn’t plan on any immediate changes to its operation. He said he thinks that the lab’s workforce has stabilized and he doesn’t think there will be any cuts in the foreseeable future. He was equally optimistic on funding. “AFMC Commander, Gen. Les Lyles, is a great proponent of science and technology.” Nielsen said, “He is putting a lot of energy into this right now. It is good for us that he is

willing to do that.”

“I’ve been very impressed with what our people here at Eglin have been working on,” commented Nielsen. “I shouldn’t have been surprised, since I’ve been in the lab business in the past. But each time I see all the projects they are working on, and how wonderful the people are, I’m impressed,” he said.

During his visit, the general presided over an assumption of command ceremony for the Munitions Directorate. Col. Tom Maseillo took the reins as the new commander for the Eglin Research Site of AFRL, Det 6, and as the Director of the Munitions Directorate. Masiello was the commander of Eglin’s 40th Flight Test Squadron. @